

Bishop Farrell, President Keefe, Mr. Bozell, Provost Eaker, members of the Board of Trustees and the Administration, faculty, family, friends, and my most dear classmates of the class of 2015, greetings and good morning to you all. I want to first and foremost thank you all for the privilege to stand here and speak to you today, so as to celebrate you and all your achievements in these four years.

Thus, we have reached the end, my dear friends. Here and now do four years of agony and ecstasy take some semblance of shape and finality: all the seeming monotony of the endless courses, the essays, examinations, lab reports, reading assignments, all of these have, in their various ways, come to a climax and shaped us into something new and different from the people we were when we first stepped onto the undulating pavement of this campus.

We as persons have been formed in a number of ways, but principally by our education, by a necessary purification in a way, a sometimes painful but joyful extraction of ourselves out of ourselves, of knowledge out of ignorance, of virtue out of vice—all of this done so as to be present to realities other than oneself which demand your responsible attention. However, an education, especially one gained here at the University of Dallas, does not simply consist of the pursuit of wisdom through our studies alone. An education is difficult because it demands we come out of ourselves not simply intellectually but actively, through our service of active love towards one another as friends in a very special kind of community, one united in a common faith, hope, and love as well as a common intellectual endeavor. And it is this community that deserves to be highlighted here today. We have been formed by our education, by a drawing out of ourselves towards something higher in many cases; but in most cases we are drawn out and into the mystery of the other, simply, of the face and the person of a friend.

As a commuter at the University of Dallas, the one difficult thing to obtain, unless you actively try to seek and keep it, is the beautiful, frustrating, and sometimes peculiar life of community. As a freshman, I kept to myself, my time being my own. I did not engage with others nor even consider such a life in community possible for one not physically present most of the time on campus. However, by sophomore year and the Rome semester, I was given the immense gift and joy of finding community and participating in it, a joy we all have experienced in coming to know one another in love and friendship. At the University of Dallas, I entered into a world with you all: with new faces and souls, each bespeaking something totally new and wonderful and just plain strange. From you all, the class of 2015, those uncharacteristic in nature, those of the crusher variety, our dear nomers, Shelby Flood, I received the gift of the greatest friendships I will ever encounter, the most meaningful relationships: I found myself united more deeply in word, deed, and heart with other individuals through the common pursuit of faith, wisdom, and beauty. We were there for one another countless times in acts of love in good times, and in bad. We then proved to each other to be a solid support to one another, bearing the other or being borne in our weaknesses.

We as a community have suffered a great deal recently. With the death of beloved professor Dr. Karl Maurer following so painfully close on the already devastating death of Andrew Esherick, the loss and pain seems insupportable. But yet, we do bear it with a towering love for one another that I find astonishing. Andrew and Karl Maurer in very different ways embodied the spirit of the University of Dallas community. Everyone, even if a glance or a kind word or a flash of a blue-eyed baby constituted one's total interaction with Andrew, was in some way struck by him. His was a life that drew deep from the wells of the hearts of friends and loved ones; he knew how to give and how to receive, constantly searching for truth and goodness, never satisfied with the mediocre or with any sham but pining with brimming wonder

after the beautiful. The community, his friends, and their common pursuit, after Charlotte his child and Emma and the faith, was everything for Andrew as he was to our community.

Dr. Maurer similarly loved a great many things. Despite the sometimes utter terror he inspired in some of his students, with his affectionate insults and his excruciating demands on our skill, he understood the importance of the self's unimportance: man is a noble creature but there is so much that is greater than him, that is beautiful and good and true, which deserves his unending seeking after such things in love. Both of these men, through their heroic and loving example show us how to be crusaders as we go forth: to strive and never cease to seek the truth, the good, the beautiful even in the ugliest of places, to never settle for the mediocre, to always hope and pray, and to scorn all that is easy, biased, or, as Dr. Maurer would say, "of puny and weak intellect."

Their deaths at this time in our lives have a purpose, which may never be made known to us. But I want, before I close, to divine maybe a small bit of that purpose. This crucible of pain has only solidified the bonds made throughout these four years together: faith has been drawn out and has shone like a diamond, love has been crystallized and made pure through the gift of our time and service to one another; we have united in prayer and mourning. And something almost tactile has formed in our hearts, a bond unexplainable and unnamable in character, a bond of charity. We have the capacity to share in suffering, and we have been given a helping share of it. But life is stronger than death, hope than despair, light over the dark, and no "power" of any earthly, material, or twistedly philosophical kind can triumph over love. This is a joyful time because of our life together, because of our love and the hope that holds us into the future: we *must* share in each other's joy and walk forward with gratitude.

Now we must sally forth into the wide expanse outside the university known as "the world," a dark foreboding realm, it may seem, in which this community, this love that we share between one another, generated by the blessings of our shared loves, lives, and experiences, will not be extant. Our hellos seemed only too closely followed by goodbyes, our joys by our sorrows. But these are pagan thoughts and we are most assuredly not pagans: our lives together and the ones we shall live as we go forward from this place shall not end here. The love that animates us and that draws us into one community is the love of Christ and this love cannot be bound in time but exists always and everywhere and in all things, binding together our hearts as we face our futures and go our separate ways.

I am proud to call you friends and classmates, proud of your achievements, of the men and women that you are, and excited beyond healthy measure for the men and women you shall become. I thank you for these four years and for the years to come.

Godspeed and good luck.

Rachel Pauletti
Class of 2015